



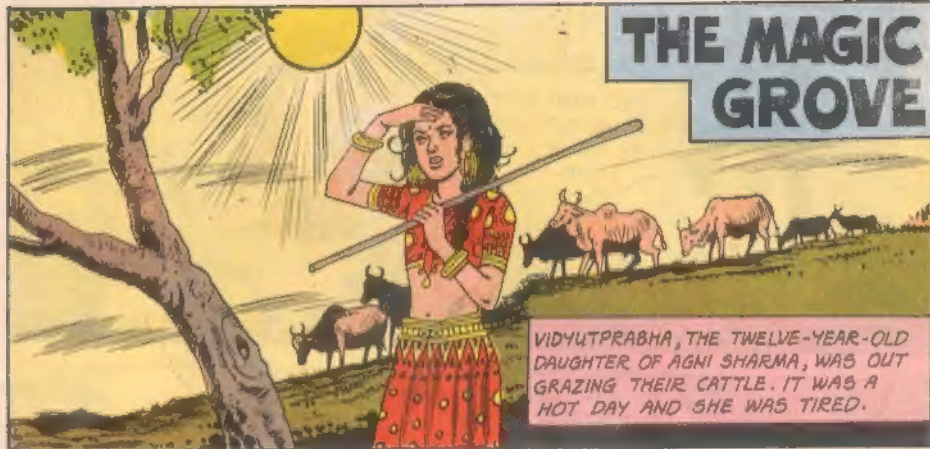
No. 168 Rs. 3.50

# THE MAGIC GROVE



A JAIN STORY

# THE MAGIC GROVE



VIDYUTPRABHA, THE TWELVE-YEAR-OLD DAUGHTER OF AGNI SHARMA, WAS OUT GRAZING THEIR CATTLE. IT WAS A HOT DAY AND SHE WAS TIRED.

WHEN HER MOTHER DIED, FOUR YEARS AGO, THE BURDEN OF RUNNING THE HOUSEHOLD, HAD FALLEN ON HER.



SHE HAD TRIED TO SOLVE THE PROBLEM SOON AFTER HER MOTHER'S DEATH.

FATHER, I FIND IT DIFFICULT TO RUN THE HOUSEHOLD ALONE. WHY DON'T YOU MARRY AGAIN?



IT'S A GOOD IDEA, VIDYUTPRABHA. I'LL DO AS YOU SAY.





BUT AGNI SHARMA'S SECOND WIFE WAS LAZY AND SHIRKED WORK.

AND NOW THAT SHE HAS A DAUGHTER, MY WORK HAS DOUBLED.

ANYWAY, I HAVE ONLY MYSELF TO BLAME. I WANTED MORE LEISURE AND LOST EVEN WHAT LITTLE I HAD.

SUDDENLY —

WHAT'S THAT? WHO'S THERE?

HISS!  
HISS

A SNAKE!

DON'T BE AFRAID. I WILL NOT HARM YOU.

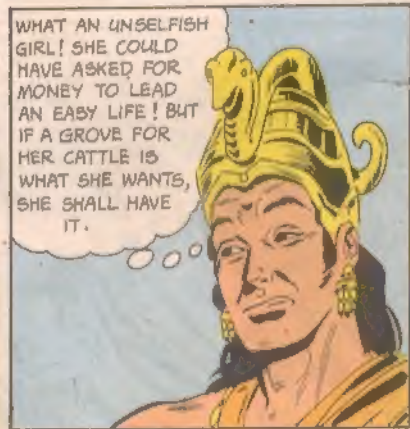
SOME SNAKE CHARMERS ARE AFTER ME. PLEASE PROTECT ME.

IT MAY BE A SNAKE. BUT IT IS IN TROUBLE AND NEEDS MY HELP.



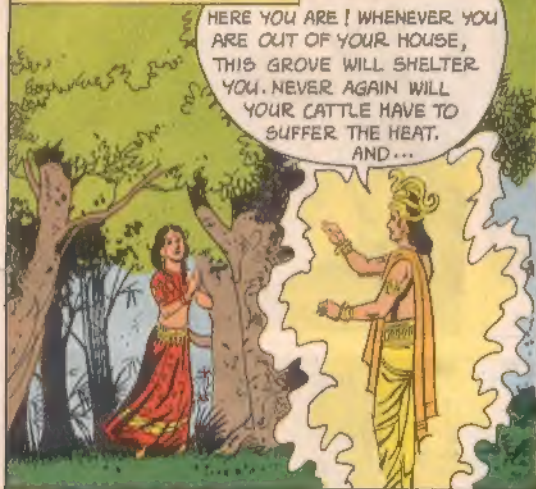






THE NEXT MOMENT, WONDER OF WONDERS, A SHADY GROVE APPEARED ABOVE VIDYUTPRABHA'S HEAD. IT HAD TREES LADEN WITH JUICY FRUIT AND FRAGRANT FLOWERS.

HERE YOU ARE! WHENEVER YOU ARE OUT OF YOUR HOUSE, THIS GROVE WILL SHELTER YOU. NEVER AGAIN WILL YOUR CATTLE HAVE TO SUFFER THE HEAT. AND...



...IF EVER YOU NEED ME, YOU ONLY HAVE TO THINK OF ME. I'LL BE THERE.



AS SOON AS THE DEVA VANISHED —

AH! GRAZING THE CATTLE WILL NO LONGER BE A TEDIOUS, TIRING, TASK.



AND AFTER A DAY IN THIS DELIGHTFUL, COOL GROVE MY CHORES AT HOME, TOO, WILL NO LONGER BE TIRESOME.





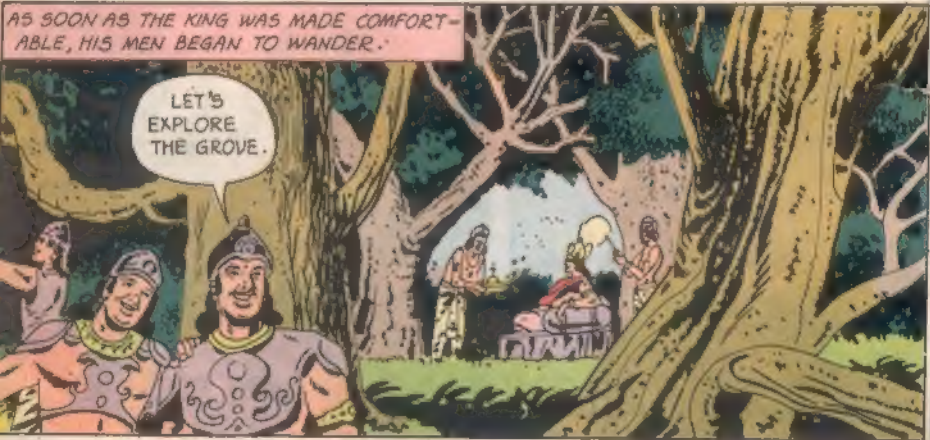
WITH THESE PLEASANT THOUGHTS, SHE SOON FELL ASLEEP.



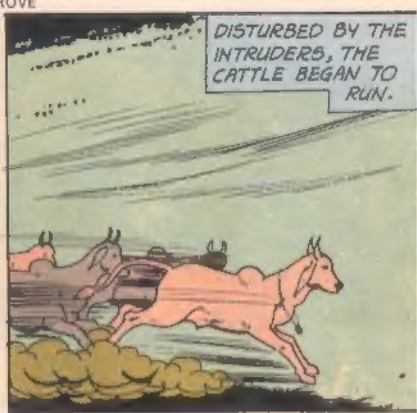
A FEW MINUTES LATER, THE KING OF PATALIPUTRA, CAME BY WITH HIS RETINUE.



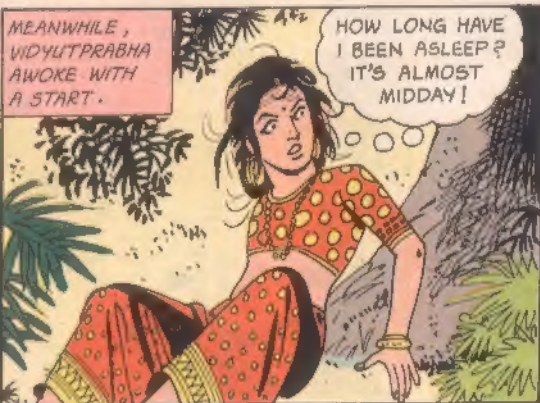
AS SOON AS THE KING WAS MADE COMFORT-  
ABLE, HIS MEN BEGAN TO WANDER.



LET'S  
EXPLORE  
THE GROVE.



DISTURBED BY THE  
INTRUDERS, THE  
CATTLE BEGAN TO  
RUN.



MEANWHILE,  
VIDYUTPRABHA  
AWOKE WITH  
A START.

HOW LONG HAVE  
I BEEN ASLEEP?  
IT'S ALMOST  
MIDDAY!



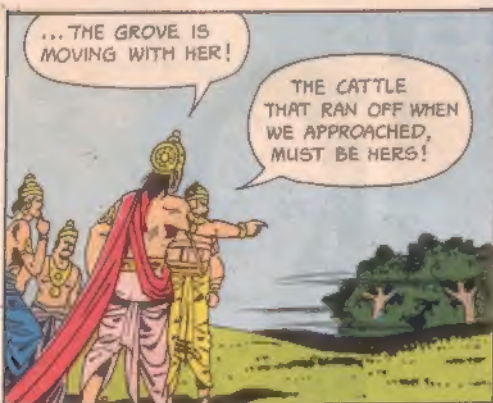
WHERE ARE  
MY CATTLE?

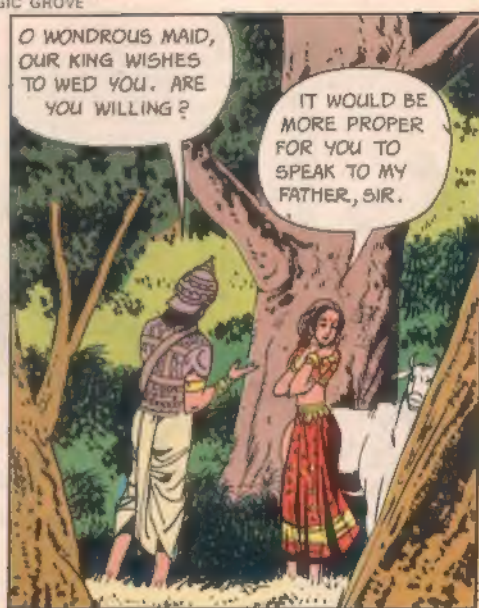


WHERE  
DID THAT  
GIRL COME  
FROM?

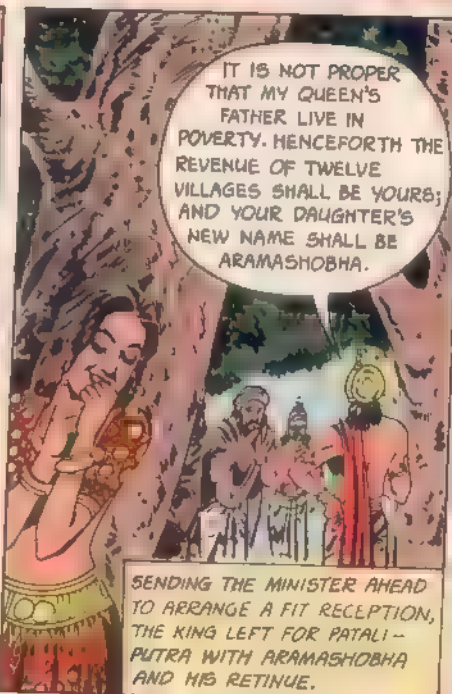


SUDDENLY —



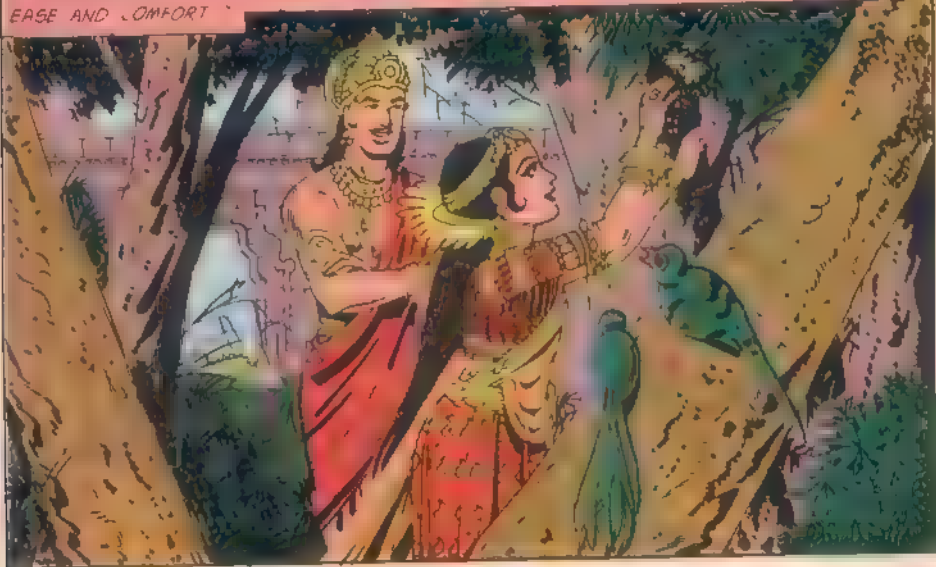






SENDING THE MINISTER AHEAD TO ARRANGE A FIT RECEPTION, THE KING LEFT FOR PATALIPUTRA WITH ARAMASHOBHA AND HIS RETINUE.

AT PATALIPUTRA, FOR THE FIRST TIME IN HER LIFE, ARAMASHOBHA LED A LIFE OF EASE AND COMFORT



MEANWHILE HER STEP-MOTHER WAS BURNING WITH ENVY AT HER GOOD FORTUNE

I SHOULD NEVER  
HAVE LET THE  
GRL GO OUT TO  
GRAZE THE COWS.



AS THE YEARS PASSED, HER ANGER  
GREW BESIDES, HER OWN DAUGHTER  
WAS NOW READY FOR  
MARRIAGE.

MY POOR DAUGHTER!  
WASTING YOUR LIFE HERE  
WHILE ARAMASHOBHA  
LIVES IN ROYAL COMFORT  
AS THE BELOVED QUEEN  
OF PATALIPUTRA. I WISH  
SHE WERE DEAD.



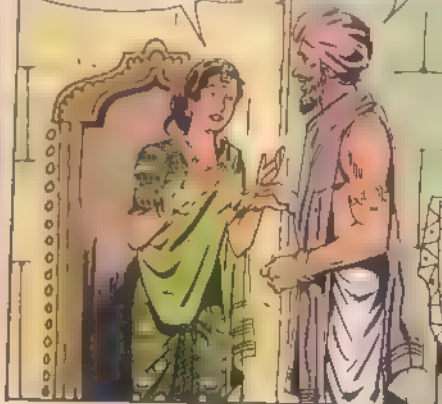
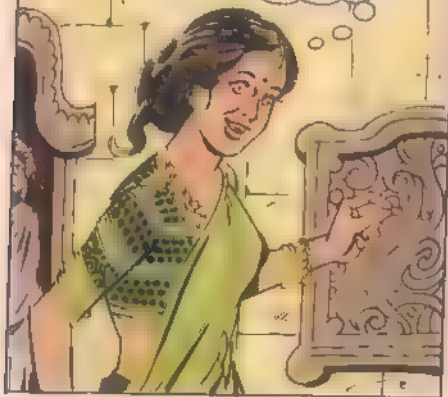


THAT'S IT! WHY DIDN'T I THINK OF IT EARLIER? IF ARAMASHOBHA DIES, THE KING MIGHT DECIDE TO MARRY HER SISTER, MY DAUGHTER!

JUST THEN, AGNI SHARMA ENTERED THE ROOM.

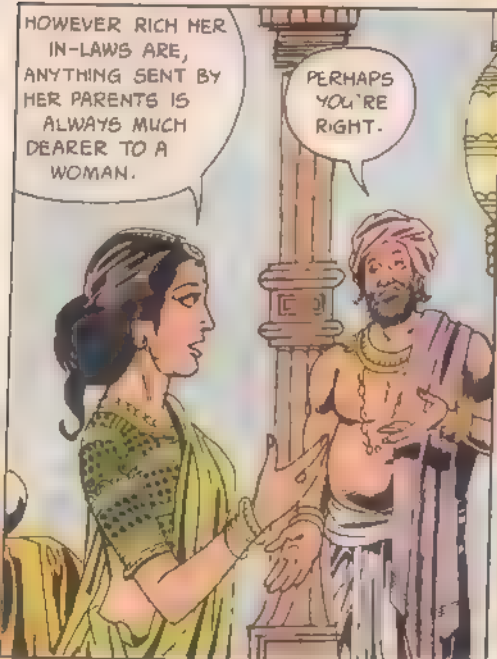
IT'S MANY YEARS SINCE ARAMASHOBHA LEFT US. AND WE HAVEN'T SENT HER ANYTHING!

BUT SHE HAS ALL SHE NEEDS. HAVE YOU FORGOTTEN THAT SHE IS A QUEEN?



HOWEVER RICH HER IN-LAWS ARE, ANYTHING SENT BY HER PARENTS IS ALWAYS MUCH DEARER TO A WOMAN.

PERHAPS YOU'RE RIGHT.



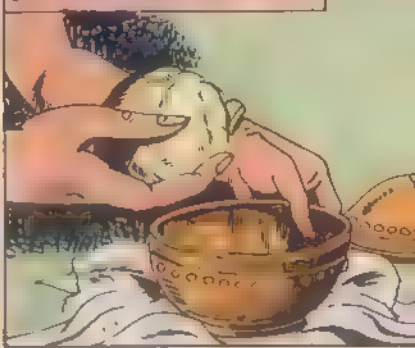
I AM GOING TO MAKE HER FAVOURITE SWEETMEAT FOR HER.



THERE! NO ONE  
WILL SUSPECT THAT  
IT'S POISONED!  
LEAST OF ALL  
THAT GIRL!



SHE PUT IT INTO A POT ...



AND TOOK IT TO HER HUSBAND.

ASK HER NOT  
TO SHARE IT WITH  
ANYONE. THEY  
MAY MAKE FUN  
OF OUR HUMBLE  
GIFT.

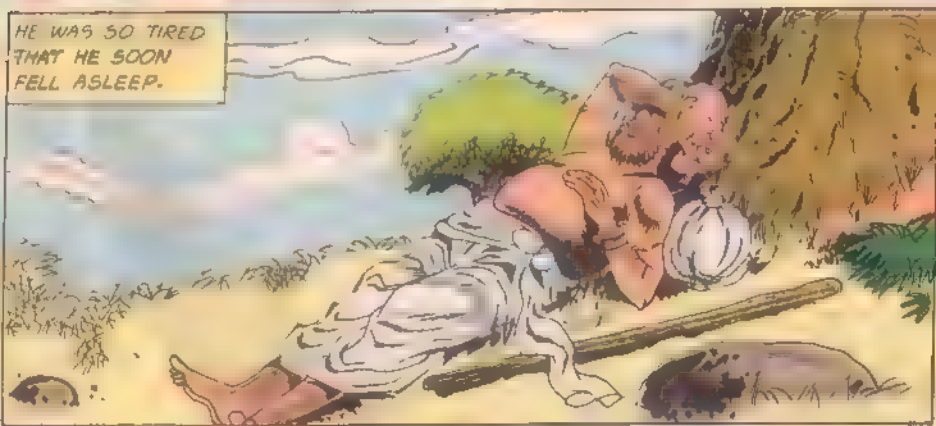


TAKING THE POT, AGNI SHARMA SET OUT  
FOR PATLIPUTRA. ON THE WAY —

WHAT A SULTRY  
DAY IT IS! I'LL  
HAVE TO REST  
FOR A WHILE.



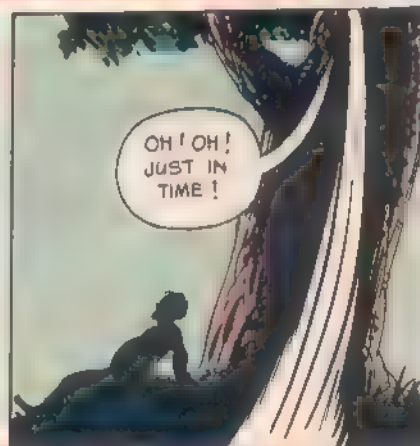
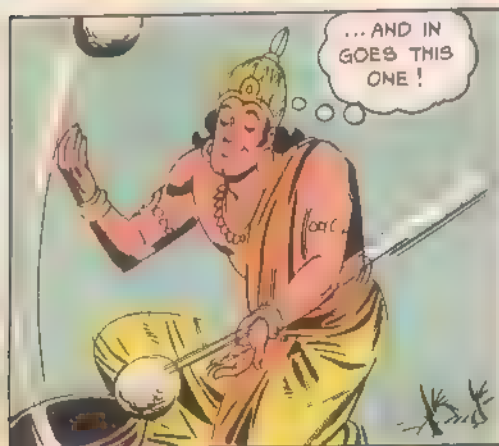
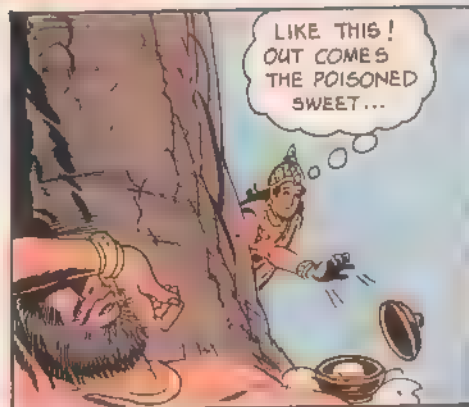
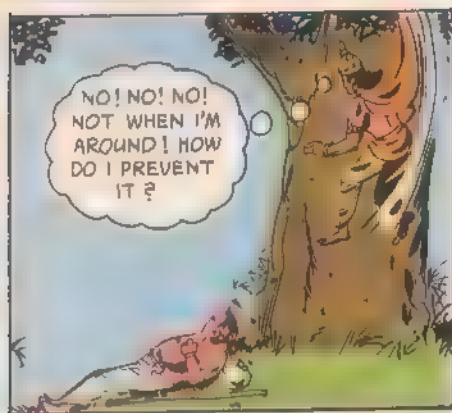
HE WAS SO TIRED  
THAT HE SOON  
FELL ASLEEP.





HEARING HIS SNORES,  
A YAKSHA\* WHO  
WAS ON THAT TREE,  
CAME OUT

WHAT DOES MY SIXTH  
SENSE TELL ME?  
ARAMASHOBHA'S STEP-  
MOTHER WANTS TO  
POISON HER!



A-A-A-AH! I'VE  
BEEN ASLEEP A  
LONG WHILE. I'D  
BETTER HURRY  
AND DELIVER  
THIS POT.

HE PICKED UP THE POT AND  
CONTINUED WALKING.

WHEN HE REACHED THE PALACE, HE  
WAS LED BEFORE THE KING.

MAY YOUR  
MAJESTY  
EVER PROSPER!

WELCOME, SIR.  
WHAT BRINGS  
YOU HERE?

MY WIFE HAS SENT  
THIS SMALL GIFT  
FOR THE QUEEN,  
HER DAUGHTER.

AFTER SO  
MANY YEARS!  
I WONDER  
WHAT IT  
COULD BE!

TAKE THIS TO  
THE QUEEN AND  
HAVE SOME ORNA-  
MENTS AND RICH  
GARMENTS BROUGHT  
HERE.

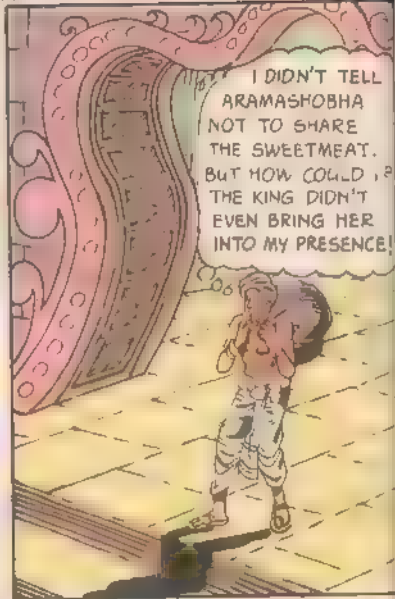


WHEN THEY WERE BROUGHT—



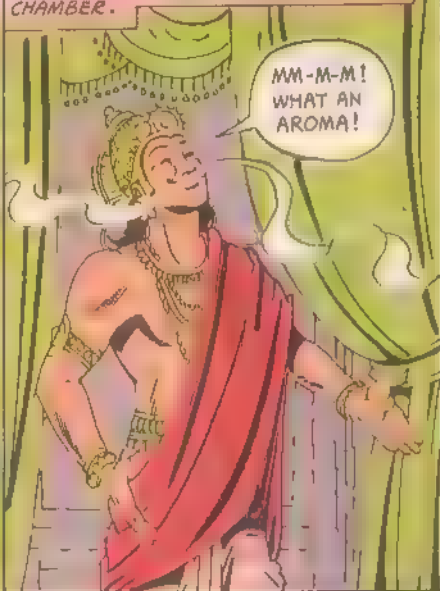
THESE ARE FOR  
YOU AND YOUR  
FAMILY—FROM  
THE QUEEN.

THANK YOU,  
YOUR  
MAJESTY.



I DIDN'T TELL  
ARAMASHOBHA  
NOT TO SHARE  
THE SWEETMEAT.  
BUT HOW COULD I,  
THE KING DIDN'T  
EVEN BRING HER  
INTO MY PRESENCE!

AS SOON AS AGNI SHARMA LEFT, THE  
KING WALKED INTO ARAMASHOBHA'S  
CHAMBER.



MM-M-M!  
WHAT AN  
AROMA!



AH, MY QUEEN!  
AREN'T YOU  
GOING TO SHARE  
THAT WITH ME?

HOW COULD I  
EAT IT WITHOUT  
FIRST OFFERING  
IT TO YOU!

WHEN AGNI SHARMA RETURNED HOME —

DID YOU  
GIVE IT TO  
HER? DID YOU  
SEE HER  
EAT IT?

HOW COULD  
I? SHE'S A  
QUEEN THE POT  
WAS SENT TO  
HER ROOM.

OH, WELL! SHE IS SURE  
TO HAVE EATEN IT ALL  
HERSELF. I'LL HAVE TO  
BE PATIENT AND WAIT  
FOR THE NEWS OF  
HER DEATH.

SHE WAITED IN  
VAIN THEN ONE  
DAY

PERHAPS THE POISON  
WAS NOT DEADLY ENOUGH  
I'LL SEND HER ANOTHER  
SWEETMEAT WITH A  
DEADLIER ONE



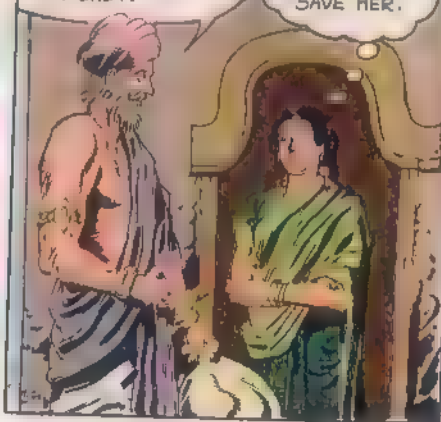
BUT THE SECOND TIME TOO, THE YAKSHA FOILED HER EVIL PLANS BY REPLACING THE POISONED SWEETMEAT WITH A CELESTIAL ONE.



WHEN AGNI SHARMA RETURNED HOME AFTER HIS VISIT TO THE PALACE —

THIS TIME, TOO, I DID NOT SEE ARAMASHOBHA. BUT I LEARNT THAT SHE IS EXPECTING A BABY.

SHE'LL BE DEAD BEFORE THAT HAPPENS. NOTHING CAN SAVE HER.



MONTHS PASSED, BUT NO NEWS OF THE QUEEN'S DEATH REACHED HER. SO SHE MADE YET ANOTHER SWEETMEAT WITH THE DEADLIEST POISON SHE KNEW OF.

TAKE THIS TO ARAMASHOBHA AND BRING HER BACK WITH YOU. SHE MUST DELIVER HER FIRST CHILD IN HER MOTHER'S HOME. IF THE KING DOES NOT AGREE, FORCE HIM TO.

I WILL TRY.



AS SOON AS AGNI SHARMA LEFT, THE STEP-MOTHER SENT FOR THE VILLAGE WELL-DIGGER

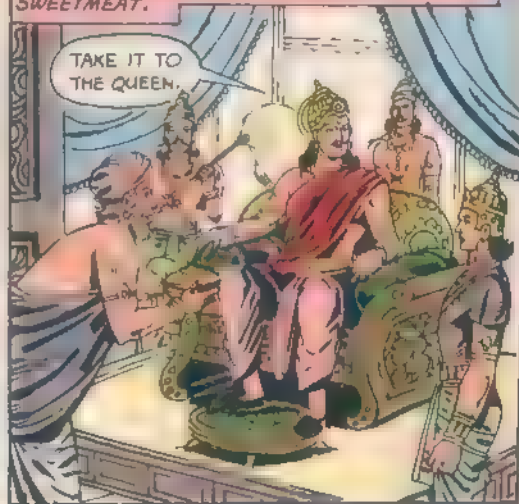
I WANT A WELL DUG IN MY BACKYARD. IT SHOULD BE DEEPER THAN ANY WELL IN THE VILLAGE.



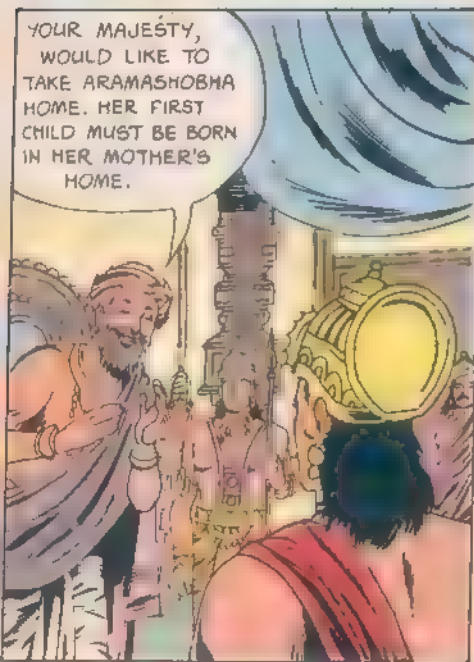
NOW, EVEN IF THE  
POISON FAILS,  
THE WELL WILL  
NOT!



MEANWHILE, AS BEFORE, THE YAKSHA WAS  
ALERT AND THE POT AGNI SHARMA GAVE TO  
THE KING CONTAINED A HARMLESS  
SWEETMEAT.



YOUR MAJESTY,  
WOULD LIKE TO  
TAKE ARAMASHOBHA  
HOME. HER FIRST  
CHILD MUST BE BORN  
IN HER MOTHER'S  
HOME.



YOUR MAJESTY, OF  
COURSE, MUST BE  
AWARE OF THE  
CUSTOM.

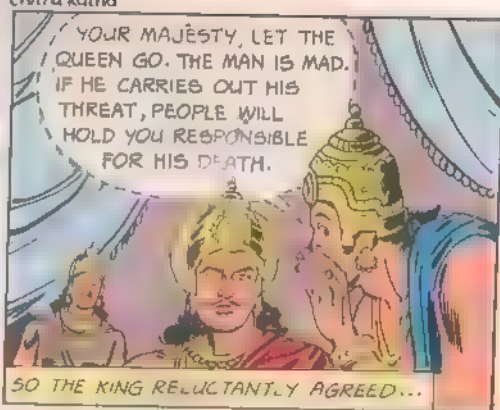
IMPOSSIBLE!  
I CANNOT LET  
HER GO WITH  
YOU.







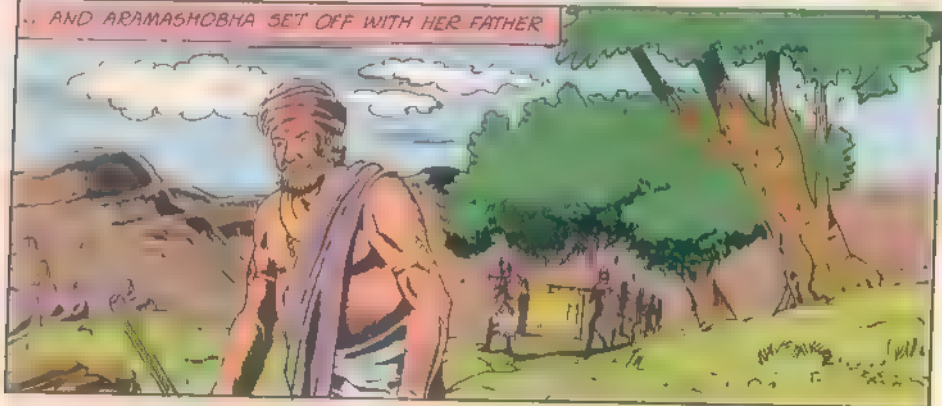
IF YOU DON'T  
SEND HER, I'LL  
GIVE UP MY  
LIFE RIGHT  
HERE.



YOUR MAJESTY, LET THE  
QUEEN GO. THE MAN IS MAD.  
IF HE CARRIES OUT HIS  
THREAT, PEOPLE WILL  
HOLD YOU RESPONSIBLE  
FOR HIS DEATH.

SO THE KING RELUCTANTLY AGREED...

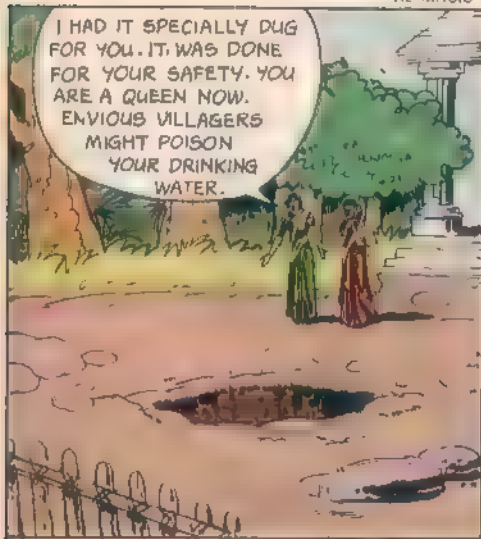
.. AND ARAMASHOBHA SET OFF WITH HER FATHER



AT HOME, A FEW DAYS AFTER ARAMASHOBHA'S SON WAS BORN, SHE WAS OUT IN  
THE BACKYARD WITH HER STEP-MOTHER.

MOTHER, WHEN  
WAS THIS WELL  
DUG? IT WASN'T  
THERE WHEN  
I LEFT FOR  
PATALIPUTRA.







THE DEVA HEARD HER CALL



HOW DID YOU  
FALL INTO  
THE WELL?

M-MY...  
STEP-MOTHER  
...SHE PUSHED...  
ME ... IN.

I'LL SLAY HER THIS  
MINUTE AND TAKE  
YOU TO THE  
PALACE.

NO! NO,  
PLEASE DON'T!  
THINK OF MY  
FATHER.

ALL RIGHT. THEN I'LL  
BUILD A HOME FOR  
YOU IN THE NETHER-  
WORLD BELOW THIS  
WELL, WHERE YOU  
SHALL KNOW NO  
WANT.

MEANWHILE WHEN THE MAIDS WHO HAD COME WITH THE MINISTER TO TAKE ARAMASHOBHA HOME, ENTERED HER CHAMBER, THEY HEARD THE STEP-MOTHER WAILING.

ALAS, MY DAUGHTER! SOMEONE HAS CAST AN EVIL EYE ON YOUR GOOD FORTUNE. WHERE IS YOUR BEAUTY? YOUR GRACE? WHAT WILL THE KING SAY?

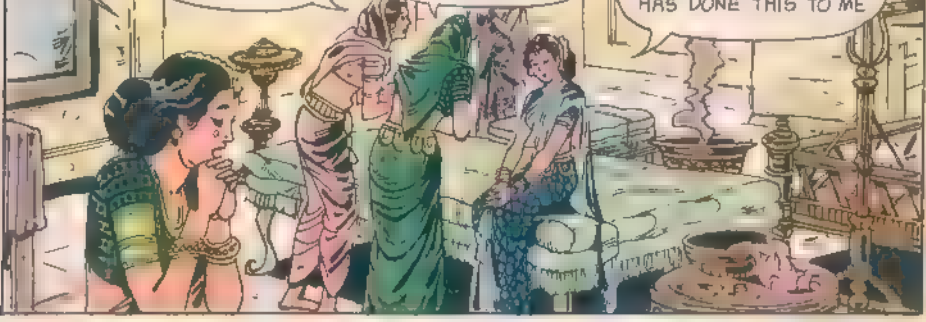


ALAS!  
ALAS!

WHAT'S THE MATTER, O QUEEN? ARE YOU ILL?

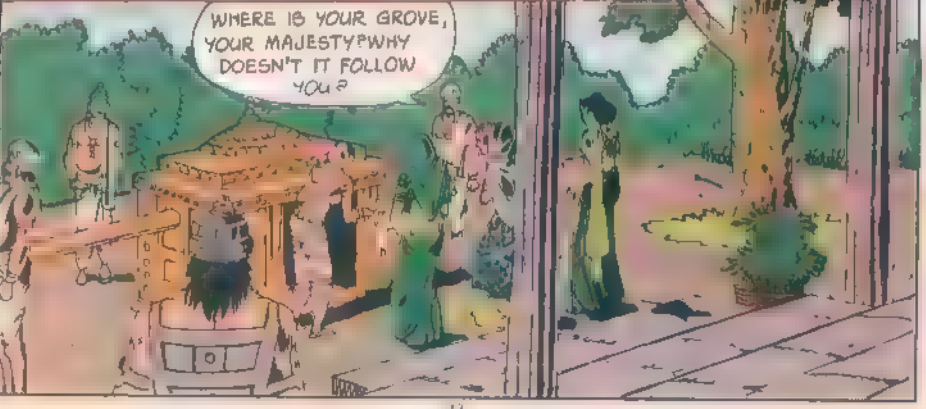
YOUR FACE IS BLOATED AND YOUR EYES ARE DULL!

I KNOW. I SEEM TO BE SUFFERING FROM SOME STRANGE DISEASE WHICH HAS DONE THIS TO ME



LATER, AS THEY WERE READY TO SET OUT FOR PATALIPUTRA --

WHERE IS YOUR GROVE, YOUR MAJESTY? WHY DOESN'T IT FOLLOW YOU?





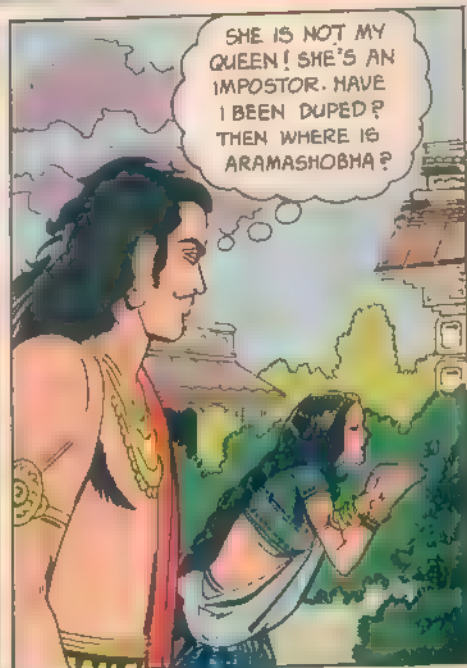
OH! IT HAS GONE TO THE WELL TO GET WATERED. I WILL SOON FOLLOW.

WHEN THEY REACHED THE PALACE AT PATALIPUTRA, THE KING CAME OUT TO RECEIVE THEM.

AH! WHAT A BEAUTIFUL CHILD!

BUT WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH YOU, MY BELOVED?

IT MUST BE SOME INTERNAL DISEASE OR D.S-ORDER, MY LORD. IT HAPPENED SOON AFTER THE PRINCE WAS BORN.





MEANWHILE THOUGH SAFE AND COMFORTABLE, ARAMA-SHOBHA WAS UNHAPPY.

O DEVA, I LONG FOR MY SON I WANT TO HOLD HIM IN MY ARMS.

ALL RIGHT, TONIGHT I'LL TRANSPORT YOU TO HIM. BUT YOU MUST RETURN BEFORE SUNRISE IF YOU DON'T.

...A DEAD SNAKE WILL DROP FROM YOUR HAIR AND I CAN NEVER AGAIN COME TO YOUR AID

WILL SEE THAT. FULFIL THE CONDITION.

THAT NIGHT —

I'LL TAKE SOME FLOWERS AND FRUIT FROM MY GROVE BEFORE I LEAVE.

WHEN SHE REACHED THE PALACE —

OH, MY SON! MY DARLING SON!

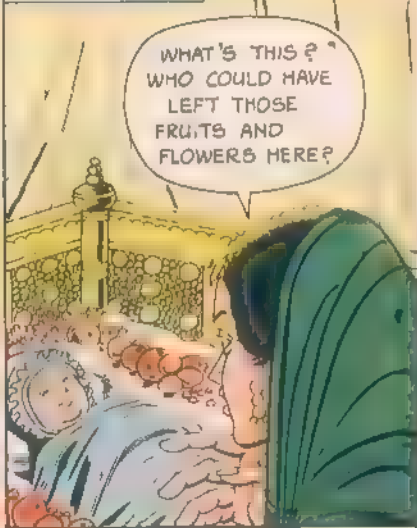
ALL TOO SOON, THE HOURS FLEW PAST AND IT WAS TIME FOR HER TO DEPART.

I'LL COME BACK TONIGHT. TILL THEN, FAREWELL.



THE NEXT MORNING, WHEN THE BOY'S MAID AWOKE —

WHAT'S THIS? WHO COULD HAVE LEFT THOSE FRUITS AND FLOWERS HERE?



SHE IMMEDIATELY REPORTED THE MATTER TO THE KING.

...AND THEY ARE EXACTLY LIKE THE ONES THAT GREW IN THE QUEEN'S GROVE

ASK THE QUEEN TO SEE ME IN THE PRINCE'S CHAMBER.

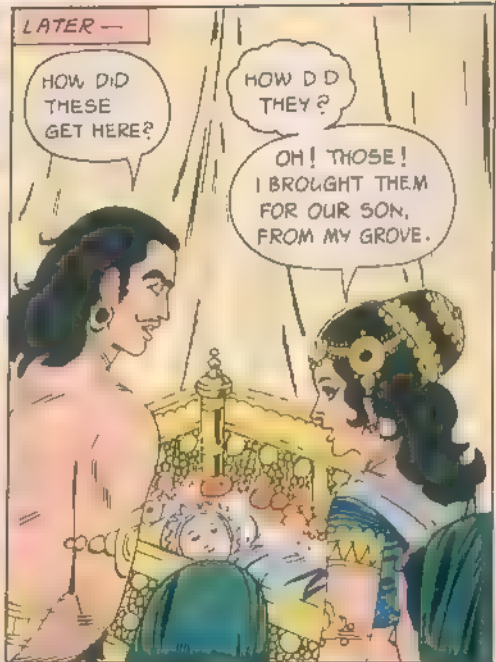


LATER —

HOW DID THESE GET HERE?

HOW DID THEY?

OH! THOSE! I BROUGHT THEM FOR OUR SON, FROM MY GROVE.



IS THAT SO?  
THEN BRING  
ME SOME  
JUST NOW.

NOT NOW, MY  
LORD. I'LL  
GET THEM  
TONIGHT.



WHEN THE SAME THING HAPPENED THE NEXT  
MORNING —

TOMORROW  
NIGHT, I SHALL  
KEEP WATCH.



IT'S HER!  
MY BELOVED  
QUEEN! SHE  
IS SAFE!



AH! MY  
DARLING!  
I'VE  
COME!





POOR ARAMASHO-  
BHA, HOW SAD SHE  
SOUNDS. HOW  
MUCH SHE MUST  
SUFFER!

WILL I EVER  
BE ABLE TO  
BE WITH  
YOU ALL  
DAY?


WHEN IT WAS ALMOST SUNRISE -

ALAS ! I MUST  
LEAVE YOU  
NOW.

NO, YOU WON'T,  
ARAMASHOBHA.


MY LORD, YOU !  
PLEASE LET ME GO.  
DON'T STOP ME  
NOW. I'LL COME  
BACK TONIGHT AND  
TELL YOU ALL.

NO, ARAMASHOBHA.  
NOW THAT I'VE FOUND  
YOU, I WILL NOT  
LET YOU GO.




PLEASE, MY LORD, IF YOU DON'T...

NO, MY QUEEN. TONIGHT IS TOO FAR OFF. TELL ME NOW. TELL ME ALL. TILL YOU DO, I WON'T LET GO OF YOUR HAND.




WHAT SHALL I DO? IF I BEGIN TO TELL HIM ALL THAT HAPPENED, I WON'T FINISH BEFORE DAWN. IF I DON'T, HE WON'T LEAVE ME. I HAVE NO CHOICE.


SO SHE BEGAN HER TALE, TRYING TO TELL IT AS FAST AS SHE COULD.



...AND THE DEVA SAID THAT IF I DIDN'T RETURN BEFORE SUNRISE...



... A DEAD SNAKE WOULD DROP FROM MY...



...HAIR. ALAS! IT'S HAPPENED. I AM LINDONE. I HAVE LOST MY DEVA. TO WHOM WILL I TURN NOW?



AND ARAMASHOBHA FAINTED.



WHEN SHE CAME TO —



TAKE HEART, MY DEAR. YOU WON'T NEED THE DEVA ANY MORE. SINCE I WON'T LET YOU OUT OF MY SIGHT, NO ONE CAN EVER HARM YOU AGAIN.

AS FOR YOUR STEP-SISTER, SHE SHALL BE SEVERELY BEATEN.

NO, MY LORD. SPARE HER FOR MY SAKE. SHE IS MY SISTER.



ALL RIGHT, I WILL. BUT SHE SHALL BE BANISHED FROM THE KINGDOM FOREVER WITH HER MOTHER.



ARAMASHOBHA AND THE KING LIVED HAPPILY FOR MANY YEARS, ENJOYING ALL THE LUXURIES OF LIFE. WHEN THEIR SON CAME OF AGE, THEY CROWNED HIM KING AND JOINED THE HOLY ORDER OF ACHARYA VIRABHADRA.